DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 932 TM 028 882

TITLE English 33 Diploma Examination Results--Examiners' Report for January 1997.

INSTITUTION Alberta Dept. of Education, Edmonton. Student Evaluation Branch.

PUB DATE Jan 97

NOTE 9p.; For English 33 Diploma Examination Results, see TM 028 883.

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Constructed Response; *Reading Achievement; Reading Comprehension; Reading Tests; Secondary Education; *Writing Achievement; Writing Evaluation; Writing Tests

IDENTIFIERS *Alberta; *Response to Literature

ABSTRACT

The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public in Alberta, Canada with an overview of results from the January 1997 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. The information in the report is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports. The report notes that of the nearly 13,000 students who wrote the January 1997 examination, 96.2% of these students achieved the acceptable standard, and 13.6% of these students achieved the standard of excellence. The report provides statistical data and examiner's comments for the reader's response to literature assignment and the literature composition assignment. It also presents statistical data, examiners' comments, and a discussion of examination questions on the reading portion that many students answered incorrectly. (SLD)

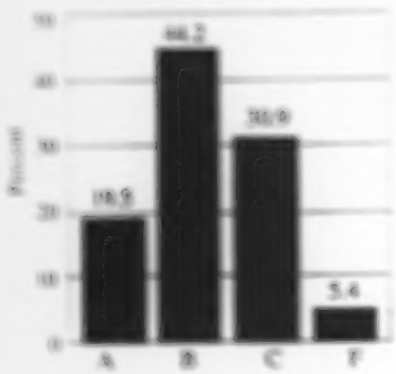
****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 409 602

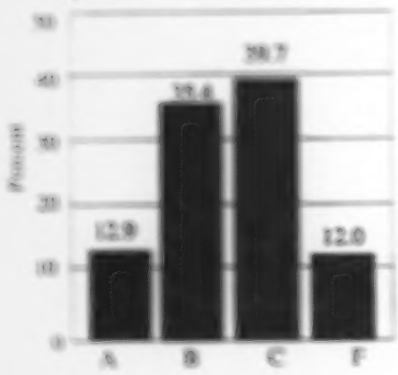
English 30

Diploma Examination Results
Examiners' Report for January 1997

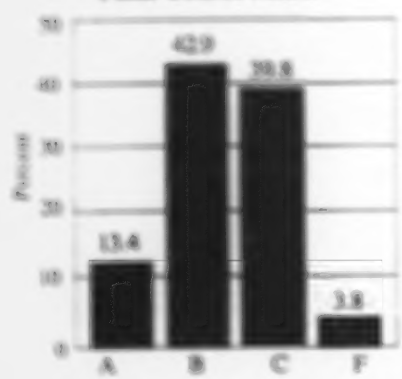
School-Awarded Mark



Diploma Examination Mark



Final Course Mark



The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public with an overview of results from the January 1997 administration of the English 30 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been provided to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined November, January, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The English 30 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each part is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 9 765 students who wrote the January 1997 examination.

- 96.2% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 13.4% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Students who achieved the standard of excellence (80% or higher, or A) on the diploma examination demonstrated impressive competence in their writing. Students who achieved the acceptable standard (50% to 64%, or C) showed often that they were able to use language well, but did not always sustain this ability.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 68.0%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 64.4%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 66.7%.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Student Evaluation

Alberta Education

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Part A: Written Response

Part A: Written Response is written at a different time from *Part B: Reading*. Students are required to complete two writing assignments related to the same piece of literature. Both assignments assess a variety of reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing these results is at the **(3) Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria are in the *English 30 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examination Program* for the 1996–97 school year, which is available in all schools.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. In January 1997, the average raw score for Part A was 32.1 out of 50.

By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark(%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
			Excellent (5)	(4.5)	Proficient (4)	(3.5)	Satisfactory (3)	(2.5)	Limited (2)	(1.5)	Poor (1)	Ins*
Minor Assignment The student is required to respond personally and thoughtfully to literature, and to communicate clearly and effectively in writing.	Thought and Detail	7.5	5.2	4.4	19.9	14.5	32.0	12.6	9.4	1.3	0.6	0.1
	Writing Skills	7.5	4.6	3.9	20.1	15.4	36.9	10.0	7.0	1.1	1.0	0.1
Major Assignment The major assignment maintains a thematic connection to the minor assignment. The student is required to demonstrate an appreciation of literary works studied in class by discussing theme and the literary techniques that the author uses to support that theme. The student is also required to synthesize thoughts clearly and correctly in writing.	Thought and Detail	12.5	5.5	3.6	16.1	11.1	27.9	15.5	16.1	2.6	1.5	0.2
	Organization	7.5	4.8	3.6	16.7	13.2	36.9	13.6	9.1	1.3	0.6	0.2
	Matters of Choice	7.5	5.8	3.3	17.6	12.3	40.1	10.7	7.8	1.1	1.0	0.2
	Matters of Correctness	7.5	5.8	4.2	19.2	14.4	32.2	11.1	9.6	1.7	1.5	0.2

*Ins (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off-topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard on each scoring category.

Examiners' Comments

Reader's Response to Literature Assignment

This assignment is intended to focus the student as a reader on his or her own response to a text and a theme that are provided. The January 1997 Reader's Response to Literature Assignment required students to use their response to the poem "Swimming Alone" as a means of exploring the concept of risk-taking.

The ambiguities in the poem (for example "never come out of the lake" implies either death or happiness) and the tension created by imagery and word choice throughout resulted in a variety of responses to details in the poem and their relationship to risk-taking. Students were able to relate to the details in the poem on a literal level and to extend the significance of the details to more universal considerations.

Most students who chose to discuss the poet's response to risk-taking fell into one of two camps: risk-taking is good or risk-taking is bad. Other students offered personal philosophy about risk-taking. Others methodically discussed the risk of swimming alone as detailed in the poem. Still others referred to the progression of ideas and images in each stanza and noted the structured effect of the poem.

Although a great variety of responses to the poem and approaches to the assignment was evident, fewer students wrote responses using personal experience or anecdotes than in previous years.

Students achieving scores of **(4) Proficient** and **(5) Excellent** were perceptive and focused in their personal response to the poem. Those students achieving **(3) Satisfactory** were inclined to respond to the poem on a literal level; that is, they identified the experience presented in the poem as being a dangerous situation that should be avoided.

Literature Composition Assignment

Students were required to respond to the question: "What idea does the author develop regarding risk-taking?" In their responses, students referred to a wide variety of literature (at least 40 different texts.) The assignment was intended to establish risk-taking as a conscious choice rather than an accident, mistake, danger, or obstacle.

Students who achieved overall scores of **(4) Proficient** and **(5) Excellent** usually presented carefully thought-out discussions about what risk-taking implies. Often, these students examined characters' *failure* to take risks. They were also highly aware of the writer's craft in character development. Many students effectively developed their theses by comparing characters who responded to the presence of *risk* in very different ways. Students at this level showed confidence in their use of language as well as in their ability to interpret the literature insightfully. Their discussions were effectively structured, and their supporting evidence was carefully chosen and appropriate.

Students who achieved overall scores of **(3) Satisfactory** had no difficulty in selecting literature that applied to the topic. Usually these students considered the word "consequence" in the assignment as connotatively negative and concluded that risk-taking is to be avoided if possible because the results are undesirable. Often, these students appeared not to recognize that risk-taking involves a conscious choice and is an essential component in maturation.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	B	52.9
2	A	84.1
3	C	52.7
4	B	73.2
5	A	83.7
6	C	54.6
7	D	86.2
8	A	51.4
9	A	73.1
10	B	63.6
11	A	67.3
12	A	49.4
13	A	73.8
14	C	77.6
15	C	56.3
16	D	54.0
17	C	45.0
18	C	80.7
19	A	81.1
20	B	45.0
21	A	71.2
22	D	76.3
23	C	53.5
24	D	52.0
25	B	53.4
26	C	78.2
27	A	69.4
28	B	55.1
29	D	48.4
30	B	57.4
31	A	67.0
32	B	64.2
33	B	57.0
34	B	62.8
35	C	62.2
36	C	72.3
37	A	80.2
38	D	70.4
39	D	43.4
40	D	60.0
41	A	40.4
42	C	63.4
43	C	75.2
44	D	41.6
45	C	67.5
46	D	64.0
47	A	58.4
48	D	61.3
49	C	57.9
50	C	52.7
51	D	55.9
52	A	84.7
53	A	49.3
54	B	64.2
55	D	83.8
56	C	59.4
57	D	43.7
58	B	86.4
59	C	66.3
60	D	72.0
61	B	64.1
62	A	37.8
63	B	52.5
64	C	69.6
65	A	64.9
66	D	69.2
67	D	71.4
68	B	61.9
69	B	73.7
70	C	52.1

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

Part B: Reading

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint

Part B: Reading has a value of 70 marks, one for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: according to the curricular content area being tested and according to the thinking (process) skill demanded by the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in January 1997 according to these classifications.

	Classification by Thinking Skills			
Classification by Course Content	**Literal Understanding**	**Inference and Application**	**Evaluation**	**Total**
Meanings	2, 13, 29	6, 9, 10, 15, 18, 19, 20, 28, 32, 44, 46, 49, 52, 53, 58, 60, 64, 65, 67, 68, 70	4, 7, 8, 24, 25, 47, 62	31 Items (22%)
Critical Response	63	3, 5, 11, 12, 21, 22, 26, 31, 35, 42, 45, 48, 50, 54, 55, 61, 66, 69	1, 14, 17, 40, 43, 56	25 Items (18%)
Human Experience and Values	33	16, 27, 34, 37, 38, 41, 51	23, 30, 36, 39, 57, 59	14 Items (10%)
Total	5 Items (4%)	46 Items (33%)	19 Items (14%)	70 Items* (50%)

*Subtest Results**

Results are in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 45.4 out of 70

Course Content

- Meanings: 19.5 out of 31
- Critical Response: 17.4 out of 25
- Human Experience and Values: 8.7 out of 14

* Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results, because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.

Examiners' Comments

Discussion

The results of Part B: Reading indicate that English 30 students are proficient in close reading.

Most students are able to successfully infer the meaning even from texts that teachers say are most difficult for them: poetry and Shakespearean drama.

Students managed very well the two poetry selections. The average difficulty (percentage of students answering correctly) on the set of questions 1 to 8, based on the poem *Summer Afternoons and Hypnosis*, was 72.6%. The average difficulty for the set of questions based on *The Face*, questions 45 to 51, was 63.1%, a very respectable achievement.

The mean difficulty (percentage of students answering correctly) for the set of questions, 52 to 62, based on an excerpt from *Henry IV, Part 2* was 66.1%. This is a remarkable achievement given that the passage contains 120 lines of text that would require careful reading and rereading to answer correctly even questions requiring literal understanding. Questions 52, 55, and 56 were correctly answered by 84.5%, 83.9%, and 89.7%, respectively, of all students. They seemed to recognize that Henry is a worried man who has been cast unwillingly into the role of King and protector of a troubled England. Despite this evidence of student understanding, a surprisingly large percentage, 56.3%, failed to answer question 57 correctly. This question requires students to recognize what is revealed about Henry's character by his comments regarding "the book of fate," a metaphorical "book" that represents the universal human wish to know the future. Henry concludes the speech referred to by saying that if young people could see or *predict* the future, they would be too overwhelmed to continue life. While the King may very well have some fears for his own future (alternative A), he does not indicate this in the passage reference.

The table below provides information about 4 questions on Part B: Reading. For each question, statistics are given for three student groups.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

Student Group	Question Number			
	17	23	28	29
All Students	45.0	53.5	55.1	48.4
Students achieving the *standard of excellence* (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	67.0	79.7	83.1	77.0
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received between 50% to 64%, or C, on the whole examination	37.1	43.5	44.7	37.9

17. The allegorical nature of this piece is made **most** evident by the

    A. use of an introductory epigraph
    B. underlying contrast between youth and age
    • C. personification of such abstract qualities as youth
    D. dramatization of the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar

Question 17 is the opening question of a set based on "*On the Departure of a Guest.*" The question was intended to assist students in decoding this dramatic passage, by establishing for them, its allegorical character. That it proved to be difficult (45% of all students answered correctly) indicates that many students are not familiar with literary terminology. Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 67.0% chose the correct answer. Of those students who scored between 50% and 64% on the examination, only 37.1% answered correctly. Even among those students in the higher scoring group, students answering incorrectly were evenly divided among alternatives A, B, and D, suggesting that they were guessing.

Many students, it seems, are *also* not familiar with the term "personification" or they would have recognized that alternative C is a description of the nature of this passage.

The question is classified as Evaluation. Students should be reminded that, in this type of question; all of the alternatives contain some measure of correctness, in this case, evidence of *allegory*. The fact that "youth" is one of the two characters in the dramatic passage constitutes strong evidence of allegory.

23. The Host's uncertainty about his future is **most evident** in his response to the offer of

A. Pride
B. Health
•C. Ambition
D. Immortality

Question 23 proved to be difficult, probably because answering correctly requires very focused reading. Since the question does not provide a line reference, students must read more generally to determine where, in his responses, the "Host's uncertainty about his future" is most evident. Students with strong thinking skills might have made the connection between "uncertainty about his future" and the Host's uncertainty about keeping or giving up *ambition*, since "ambition" requires an assumption concerning the future.

Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 79.7% answered the question correctly. Of those who scored between 50% and 64%, 43.5% answered correctly.

Questions 28 and 29 both require students to infer meaning from context.

28. The word "cursory" in line 52 means

A. analytical
•B. superficial
C. thorough
D. scornful

Students who are able to use context clues might have recognized that in the phrase "Even a cursory glance," the pairing of "cursory" and "glance" (lines 51–52) provides a *useful* clue in establishing meaning. A glance is a quick, hurried look, and would not fit logically with "analytical" (alternative A) or "thorough," (alternative C). The word "scornful" would be incongruous within the context of the whole sentence.

Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination (Parts A and B), 83.1% answered this question correctly. Of those students who scored between 50% and 64%, only 44.7% answered correctly.

29. When artistic expression "transcend[s] the mundane" (line 63), it can be said to

A. become practical
B. uncover illusions
C. repeat common knowledge
•D. rise above practical experience

Question 29 proved even more difficult than the previous question. Here, the context is considerably more extensive. The author's underlying purpose is to make the point that people need art to enable them to endure and to prevail over (transcend) the demands of everyday life (the mundane). He makes this point repeatedly in this excerpt. Skilled readers are able to identify main or essential points as they read. They also tend to have some knowledge of word roots and prefixes. They would recognize "trans" as a prefix of "transcend," enabling them to recognize D as the answer.

Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence on the whole examination, 77.0% were successful. Of those students who scored between 50% and 64%, 37.9% answered correctly.

Results of both questions 28 and 29 indicate that the ability to derive meaning from context is important for success in both reading comprehension and written expression.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

While it is not intended that Parts A and B of the English 30 Diploma Examination be considered as separate exams, it is interesting to compare the distribution of scores on the two parts of the examination.

	Part A	Part B
A	12.3	14.6
B	37.3	38.4
C	37.6	31.3
F	12.8	15.7

For further information, contact Gail Gates (ggates@edc.gov.ab.ca), Mary Lou Campbell (mcampbell@edc.gov.ab.ca), or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch, 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

Copyright 1997, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education, Alberta Education, Student Evaluation Branch, 11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2. All rights reserved.

***Special permission** is granted to **Alberta educators only** to reproduce, for **educational purposes** and on a **non-profit basis**, this document or any of its parts. This document can be found on our Web pages. Our internet address is http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca.*